

**REQUEST FOR INITIAL PROPOSALS**  
**Organize a National Smart Growth Conference (SGCONF - 03)**

**OVERVIEW**

EPA's Development, Community and Environment Division (DCED) is seeking proposals for organizing a National Smart Growth Conference. This conference will be a national, multi-disciplinary event that focuses on diverse smart growth issues and attracts an audience of developers, builders, local elected officials, key local government staff, transportation professionals, planners, realtors, architects, landscape architects, public health officials, law enforcement/crime prevention professionals, urban designers, lending institutions, parks and recreation professionals, bicycle and pedestrian advocates, advocates for youth and seniors, educators, youth leaders, and citizen activists. This conference should be at least a 2.5 day event with .5 days of preconference sessions and should be convened in January or February 2004. Proposals should specify that expected attendance at the conference will be over 700 people and should provide documentation of how this will be achieved. In order to promote the conference effectively and attract a wide variety of attendees, the conference should be co-sponsored by numerous associations, organizations, and governmental entities whose members have an interest in smart growth.

**BACKGROUND**

U.S. EPA's Development, Community and Environment Division (Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation) focuses on smart growth issues of regional and national significance. Smart growth development practices support national environmental goals by protecting sensitive habitats and watersheds, minimizing water quality impacts from development, reducing air emissions by increasing transportation choices and reducing heat island effects, and encouraging cleanup and sustainable redevelopment of Brownfields.

Smart growth is development that serves the economy, community, public health and the environment. Smart growth is often characterized by a common set of development principles:

1. Mix land uses
2. Take advantage of compact building design
3. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
4. Create walkable neighborhoods
5. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
6. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas
7. Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices
9. Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost-effective
10. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

**WHO IS ELIGIBLE**

Eligible applicants include (1) incorporated nonprofit (or not for profit) private agencies, institutions, and organizations incorporated or domiciled in the United States, and (2) public (state, county, regional or local) agencies, institutions and organizations. Applicants must be located in, and project activities must be conducted within, the United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, or a territory or possession of the United States. Nonprofit organizations described in section 501 (c) (4) of the Internal Revenue Code that engage in lobbying activities as defined in The Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 are not eligible to apply. For profit organizations are not eligible to apply.

**ACTIVITIES ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING**

Activities eligible for funding include:

(1) Establishing and leading a multi-disciplinary committee responsible for National Smart Growth Conference agenda planning. This team should be comprised of conference co-sponsors and should represent the variety of disciplines participating in the conference. The planning committee should be involved in: developing speaker lists, creating session topics and content, organizing mobile workshop tours of smart growth projects in the host city, and shaping the overall program.

(2) Promoting the National Smart Growth Conference and developing conference materials. This may include:

A) Developing, printing, and distributing a "save-the-date" brochure and a registration brochure. Developing mailing lists for this distribution.

B) Developing a conference webpage with information on: conference themes, sponsors, cosponsors, program information, target audience, invited and confirmed speakers, registration fees and policies, and an on-line registration form.

C) Creating a packet of materials for conference participants that includes final conference agenda, a list of all registered participants, an evaluation form, and a welcome letter (from the conference organizers/partners). Other relevant materials collected from speakers and other sources should also be included in the participant packet.

(3) Coordinating speaker and staff travel including airfare reservations, rental car, hotel room, train fare, etc.

(4) Handling conference registration and staffing the conference itself.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS**

Proposals must be received by EPA through the mail or by hand delivery (e.g., via courier, UPS, or Federal Express) no later than 5pm East Coast time Friday April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2003. Applicants must submit an original and 4 copies of their proposal package. Fax and e-mail submissions will not be accepted. Proposals received after the due date will not be considered. Please see the sections on "Proposal Contents" and "Where to Get More Information" for important additional details.

Following selection, applicants will be required to submit a formal request for funding assistance (i.e., federal form SF 424 and associated documentation) and a detailed workplan. These items should not be provided with the initial proposal. Applicants should be aware that there will be a very quick turnaround required if they are asked to submit a formal request for funding assistance (i.e., within four weeks or less after contacted by EPA after the initial selection process).

All applicants should be aware that formal requests for assistance may be subject to intergovernmental review under Executive Order 12372, *Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs*. Both proposals and formal requests for funding are also subject to the Freedom of Information Act. This means that anyone can request, and receive, copies of them. Applicants should clearly mark information they consider confidential and EPA will make final confidentiality decisions in accordance with agency regulations (40 CFR part 2, subpart B.).

## **PROPOSAL CONTENTS**

Proposals must include a cover letter, summary information page, project description, budget, documentation of qualifications, and documentation of potential project partners. Project descriptions should not exceed 10 pages (see below for additional details). The following format is required:

### **1. Cover letter** (does not count against page limit)

The cover letter used to submit your proposal must be signed by an official with the authority to commit your organization to the project and should be written on your organization's official letterhead.

### **2. Summary Information Page** (does not count against page limit)

The summary information page should be one-page long and include the following information:

-- the title and number of this Request for Initial Proposals (i.e., Organize a National Smart Growth

Conference, SGCONF-03)

- project title and location
- applicant name, address, telephone and fax numbers, and e-mail address
- name and title of project contact (including how to reach if different from above)
- type of applicant organization (e.g. nonprofit, local government, state government, etc.)
- summary budget information (amount requested from EPA; amount and source of any matching funds)
- 5 to 10 line abstract of proposal

3. Project Description (no longer than 10 page sides)

The project description must provide a concise overview of the project and include a preliminary workplan outlining the project's major tasks, products, and timetable. The narrative must also address how the proposal meets the selection criteria. If other project partners or funding sources are involved, their role and contribution must be defined. In reviewing the project description, reviewers will not consider any pages over the 10 page limit. The project description must be no longer than five pages double sided, or 10 pages single sided, must use no smaller than 10 point type and should have page margins all-around of at least one inch.

4. Budget (does not count against page limit)

The project budget should include personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual, and other. If not self-evident, entries under each category should be explained in the budget itself or in the project description.

5. Documentation of Qualifications (does not count against page limit)

The applicant must include short bios of all principle staff who will have a major role in the project. Bios must specifically address each individual's experience with smart growth issues.

6. Documentation of Potential Project Partners (does not count against page limit)

The applicant should include either letters from other organizations documenting their interest in co-sponsoring the conference by providing financial or in-kind support, or provide documentation demonstrating that they have successfully generated this kind of support for a conference of this nature in the past. (See the sections on "Budget Request and Scope of Activities" and "Selection Criteria" for additional information)

## **BUDGET REQUEST AND SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES**

EPA expects to have approximately \$70,000 available for proposals under this RFIP for this funding cycle; this is subject to availability of funding within the agency's final FY 03 budget. Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit proposals for first-year activities for approximately \$70,000 or less. Final grants may be negotiated for budget and project periods of up to five years, with funding for future years dependent on funding availability, agency priorities and applicant performance. Applicants should provide detailed descriptions of the activities proposed for the first-year under this competition, as well as a description of what follow-up activities would be conducted in subsequent years if additional funding is available. A ceiling of approximately \$450,000 for five year assistance agreements is suggested. EPA expects to award one assistance agreement under this RFIP.

There are no match or cost-sharing requirements. However the degree to which the project budget effectively uses EPA funds and leverages other funds will be considered as an evaluation criterion. Matching funds can include cash or in-kind contributions. Any dollars counted towards a formal match must be for costs that EPA can fund. Allowable costs for nonprofit organizations are defined in OMB circular A-122; allowable costs for public entities are defined in OMB circular A-87. Costs pledged as leveraging need not be for allowable costs if they are not part of a formal match. For example, an applicant could "leverage" by committing to obtain a private sponsor for a reception that could not be counted as an allowable cost for match because it would be an unallowable entertainment cost.

## **SELECTION CRITERIA**

A proposal must meet the following threshold criteria to be considered:

#### Threshold Criterion 1: Smart Growth Focus

The proposal must embody, result in, or encourage smart growth. The proposal must clearly demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the smart growth issues addressed by the project, and the applicant must clearly demonstrate expertise in smart growth issues. EPA will use the smart growth definition outlined in the background section to apply this criterion.

#### Threshold Criterion 2: Substantial Experience in Organizing a National Smart Growth Conference

The applicant must have substantial experience and demonstrated success in organizing a national, multi-disciplinary conference on smart growth. The proposal must discuss the applicant's demonstrated leadership role in smart growth, their experience in managing a national smart growth conference, their effectiveness in managing relationships between multiple agencies and organizations, and their ability to attract a multi-disciplinary audience.

#### Threshold Criterion 3: Allowable Activities

The project must consist of activities authorized under one or more of the following EPA grant authorities: Clean Air Act section 103 (b)(3); Clean Water Act section 104 (b) (3); Solid Waste Disposal Act section 8001, as amended; Toxic Substances Control Act section 10; Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act section 20, as supplemented by P.L.106-74; and Safe Drinking Water Act sections 1442 (a) and (c). Most of the statutes authorize grants for research, investigations, experiments, training, demonstrations, surveys and studies. The project activities must advance the state of knowledge or transfer information. The term "demonstrations" can encompass the first instance of the pollution control or prevention technique, or an innovative application of a previously used method. The term "research" may include the application of established practices when they contribute to learning about an environmental concept or problem.

#### Threshold Criterion 4: Environmental Focus

In order to be funded, the project's general focus must be one that is specified in the statutes listed above. For most of the statutes, a project must address the causes, effects, extent, prevention, reduction, and elimination of air, water, or solid/hazardous waste pollution, or, in the case of grants under the Toxic Substances Control Act or the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act, to "carrying out the purposes of the Act." The overarching focus must be on the statutory purpose of the applicable grant authority, in most cases "to prevent or control pollution." In light of this, proposals relating to topics which are sometimes included within the term "environment" such as recreation, conservation, restoration, or habitat protection should describe the relationship of these topics to the statutorily required purpose of pollution prevention and/or control.

#### Threshold Criterion 5: Serve a Public Purpose

Projects should be of primary benefit to the applicant organization and the public at large. Proposed projects should clearly and directly support the applicant organization's overall mission and long-term goals.

#### Threshold Criterion 6: Parameters of Event

The proposal must be for a conference of at least 2.5 days. The proposal must include at least .5 days of pre-conference sessions. Proposals must anticipate attendance of at least 700 people at the conference and include sufficient documentation of how this would be achieved and/or how the applicant has accomplished this for a previous similar event.

The threshold criteria will be applied on a pass/fail basis. Proposals which fail any one of the threshold criteria will not be considered further.

#### Evaluation factors:

If a proposal meets the threshold criteria, it will then be evaluated against the following factors:

1. Potential impact of the project and likelihood of success as demonstrated by past success in running a national conference on smart growth issues with over 700 attendees.

2. Degree to which the applicant demonstrates expertise and experience in a broad range of smart growth issues.
3. Degree to which the proposing organization is an appropriate representative for the wide range of issues to be covered in a national smart growth conference, is likely to be viewed as an authority on smart growth, and is working in partnership with other organizations that meet these requirements
4. Degree to which the project budget effectively uses EPA funds and leverages outside funds  
The proposal should describe plans for obtaining additional financial and in kind support for the National Smart Growth Conference. Although EPA is not requiring a mandatory cost share, EPA hopes to receive proposals that include leveraged funds at a ratio of at least three to one. For example, if an applicant's budget includes \$70,000 in EPA funding, EPA hopes that a minimum of \$210,000 in additional funding could be raised by the applicant from other sources. Applicants are encouraged to provide information regarding resources (cash/in-kind services) that they, or a project partner, would commit to the conference. EPA will consider these commitments as part of this ranking factor. Costs pledged as leveraging need not be for allowable costs as they will not be considered a formal match. For further information, please see the section titled "Budget Request and Scope of Activities."
5. Degree to which the project approach or findings are replicable, serve as a learning tool, and will be disseminated to appropriate audiences.

Proposals will be scored high, medium or low against each of the evaluation factors using a numerical scale of 1 through 5. Factors 1, 2, and 4 will be given higher weight than factors 3 and 5.

#### **OTHER FACTORS**

EPA will carefully consider the applicant's past performance administering federal financial assistance and carrying out projects supported by EPA and other federal agencies. This may include the results of audits conducted by EPA's Office of Inspector General, other federal agencies, or state, local or tribal oversight entities. Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss their performance history in their proposals and to provide contacts for EPA to obtain additional information. In making final selections, factors such as overall excellence, geographic diversity, project diversity, and applicant diversity (i.e., type of organization) may also be considered.

Any disputes regarding funding decisions will be resolved in accordance with 40 CFR Part 30 or 31, depending on the applicant. EPA reserves the right to reject all applications and make no awards.

#### **AWARD MECHANISM**

This solicitation falls under Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance No. 66.611, Environmental Policy and Innovation Grants, authorized under Delegation of Authority I-47.

EPA expects to use new cooperative agreements to fund approved projects. Cooperative agreements entail substantial federal involvement in the project. Such involvement may include EPA review and approval of project scope and phases; EPA participation in and collaboration on, various phases of the work; EPA review of all draft and final products; regular e-mail, phone, and conference calls; and/or EPA involvement in selection of key recipient personnel.

#### **WHERE AND WHEN TO APPLY**

You must submit one original and 4 copies of your full proposal (your full proposal includes the cover letter, summary information page, project description, budget and documentation of qualifications as described under the section entitled "Proposal Contents"). Please note that the delivery address varies depending on whether you are mailing your proposal or arranging for hand delivery.

If you are sending your proposal via hand delivery (e.g., Federal Express, Courier, UPS), send it to:

Deloris Swann  
Development, Community and Environment Division

Office of Policy, Economics, and Innovation  
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1301 Constitution Avenue N.W.  
EPA West, Room 1408 C  
Washington, D.C. 20004

If you are mailing your proposal, send it to:

Deloris Swann  
Development, Community and Environment Division  
Office of Policy, Economics, and Innovation  
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency  
mail code 1808T  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.  
Washington, DC 20004

Please also note that there may be substantial delays in mail service to EPA, due to heightened security requirements. Proposals must be received by EPA by 5pm east coast time Friday April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2003. No late proposals will be accepted. No fax or e-mail submissions will be accepted. Postmarks or meters will not be considered sufficient documentation of on-time delivery.

#### **WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION**

Applicants with questions about this solicitation should contact:

Lisa Nisenson  
Development, Community and Environment Division  
Office of Policy, Economics, and Innovation  
U. S. Environmental Protection Agency  
mail code 1808T  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.  
Washington, DC 20004  
292-566-2880  
nisenson.lisa@epa.gov

Answers to frequently asked questions will be posted on the EPA web site at [www.epa.gov/smartgrowth](http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth). The only pre-application assistance available under this competition will be related to clarifying the requirements of the RFIP.

#### **AWARD ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Recipients will be notified of who received an award through a posting of award recipients on the EPA smart growth website ([www.epa.gov/smartgrowth](http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth)). This information will be posted 30 days after EPA's Grants Administration Division issues a written offer of award to each recipient. Awards are expected to be made sometime in the Fall of 2003.

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